

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 /020 W

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P 280941Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5783

CONFIDENTIAL THE HAGUE 2162

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, NL

SUBJECT: DEN UYL VISIT: EVALUATIVE COMMENTS AND

PERSONAL DATA ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE

ADVISOR JOOP MERCKELBACH

REF: STATE 088530

1. MERCKELBACH WAS BORN SEPTEMBER 1, 1935, IN MAASTRICHT, IS MARRIED AND HAS THREE YOUNG CHILDREN. FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF HIS LAW STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NIJMEGEN IN 1963 HE JOINED GOVERNMENT SERVICE AS A JURIDICAL SPECIALIST OF THE CIVIL DEFENSE STAFF. IN 1966 HE BECAME ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. IN 1972 HE WAS PROMOTED TO HIS PRESENT POSITION AS ADVISOR IN THE CABINET OF THE MINISTER-PRESIDENT (PRIME MINISTER) FOR FOREIGN POLICY, DEFENSE, CIVIL DEFENSE AND FOR POLICY CONCERNING SURINAM AND THE NETHERLAND ATILLES. CONCURRENTLY HE SERVES AS SECRETARY OF THE GENERAL DEFENSE COUNCIL, OF THE COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMISSION FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF SURINAM.

2. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND VIEWS: MERCKELBACH IS A BIG, RATHER HANDSOME MAN WHO LOOKS SOMEWHAT OLDER THAN HIS 39 YEARS BECAUSE HE HAS LOST MOST OF DARK HAIR. DELIBERATE IN HIS MOVEMENTS, INTELLIGENT AND THOUGHTFUL, MERCKELBACH TAKES A LITTLE KNOWING BEFORE HE BECOMES FULLY COMMUNICATIVE. WHILE LESS FLUENT IN ENGLISH THAN MOST FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, MERCKELBACH CAN EXPRESS CONFIDENTIAL

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HIMSELF CLEARLY; HIS UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH IS INHIBITED

IF HE IS SPOKEN TO TOO RAPIDLY. HE IS A FRIENDLY, UNPRETENTIOUS PERSON, SOUND AND SOLID RATHER THAN BRILLIANT. HE COMES FROM A GOOD FAMILY, WHICH REFLECTS IN HIS COURTEOUS, ATTENTIVE APPROACH. SENSIBLE AND METHODICAL, HE APPEARS TO BE A VERY GOOD FAMILY MAN WITH A CHEERFUL SENSE OF HUMOR.

3. THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT MERCKELBACH'S ORIENTATION TO THE WDST AND NATO INCLUDING FEELINGS OF FRIENDSHIP AND ADMIRATION FOR THE UNITED STATES. MERCKELBACH WORKS FOR A PRIME MINISTER WHO IS A LIFE-LONG SOCIALIST, VERY MUCH A REFORMER ALTHOUGH NOT A FANATIC. DEN UYL IN TURN HEADS A GOVERNMENT DEDICATED TO RESTRUCTURING DUTCH SOCIETY INCLUDING FURTHER LEVELING OF INCOMES AND TO HELPING TO CREATE THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER IN WHICH THE DEN UYL GOVERNMENT PROFESSES STRONGLY TO BELIEVE. IN THIS IDEOLOGICAL AMBIANCE MERCKELBACH COMES ACROSS AS NON-IDEOLOGICAL. LIKE MOST DUTCHMEN HE IS NOT RELUCTANT TO SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE THE DUTCH NATIONAL INTERESTS BUT HIS CONCEPTION OF THOSE INTERESTS APPARENTLY DOES NOT INCLUDE THE RECTIFYING OF ALL THE WORLD'S INJUSTICES INCLUDING THE ALLEGED SINS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM AND US FOREIGN POLICY.

4. RELATIONS WITH HIS BOSS: MERCKELBACH IS ONE OF THE FIVE OR SIX MEN IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S CABINET WHO SEES HIM ON A REGULAR, FREQUENT BASIS. WE ASSUME HE ENJOYS THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONFIDENCE AND IS ON THE SAME GENERAL WAVELENGTH WITH HIM. MERCKELBACH DOES NOT COMMENT TO US ON DEN UYL'S POLITICS. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD DEN UYL COMES ACROSS AS LOYAL BUT UNPARTIAL. WE DO NOT KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT MERCKELBACH INFLUENCES THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE MATTERS. HOWEVER, MERCKELBACH APPEARS TO HAVE DEVELOPED CONSIDERABLE EXPERTISE ON SURINAM AND THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES, AND HAS ACCOMPANIED DEN UYL ON HIS RECENT VISITS TO THOSE COUNTRIES. HENCE IN THIS AREA MERCKELBACK IS PROBABLY MAKING AN INPUT INTO THE PRIME MINISTER'S THINKING. WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT MERCKELBACH IS ABLE TO GET A PARTICULAR THOUGHT OR SUGGESTION FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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THE EMBASSY TO DEN UYL. WE SURMISE THAT OUR SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH MERCKELBACH STARTING A YEAR AGO REGARDING THE MUTUAL BENEFIT OF A DEN UYL VISIT TO WASHINGTON HAD SOME INFLUENCE ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION TO SEEK A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD.

TANGUY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 APR 1975
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975THEHA02162
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750148-0159
From: THE HAGUE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975049/aaaaaivs.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 088530
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 OCT 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2003 by KelleyW0>; WITHDRAWN <10 JUN 2003 by WorrelSW, 3.4.X6>; RELEASED <16 OCT 2003 by greenet>; APPROVED <20 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEN UYL VISIT: EVALUATIVE COMMENTS AND PERSONAL DATA ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE
TAGS: PINR, NL, (UYL, JOHANNES DEN), (MERCKELBACH, JOOP)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006